

Mr. COOKSEY. Mr. Speaker, I was recently quoted as saying something that Sikhs, Muslims, and other Americans facing harassment and violence in this country took as offensive. I am sorry for any distress my statement caused, and I want them to know that I do not approve of any harassment or violence against any American. All I intended to say was that if a person fits the established profile of a terrorist, that person should expect to be looked at closely by airport security, given the atrocity of September 11.

Many Sikhs are being subjected to harassment due to their beards and turbans, which are required by their religion. Americans of the Muslim faith are also receiving harassment. Sikhism is an independent, monotheistic, revered religion. It is not part of any other religion, although Sikhs are sometimes mistaken for Muslims or Hindus. There are 21 million Sikhs in the world, most of whom live in the Punjab state of India. Approximately 500,000 live in the United States; and most are naturalized or American-born citizens. Most have contributed to all walks of life. Most of the people who wear turbans in this country are Sikhs.

There are many reasons Sikhs come to America, but mainly they come seeking freedom. To persecute them only weakens American unity at a time when our country is under attack.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the Sikhs, Muslims, and other Americans who are facing harassment and violence know that I do not condone such acts, that I stand shoulder to shoulder with them, and that I am on their side.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PLATTS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FOLEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICANS FACING UGLY THREATS AT HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, as America mourns its dead and prepares to launch a global war on terrorism, some Americans are facing additional ugly threats here on the home front, and they are not from foreign terrorists but, regretfully, they are from fellow citizens.

Since the attacks on New York and Washington last week, many Arab

Americans, Muslim Americans, Sikhs, and other Americans of South Asian heritage have become the targets of terrible bigotry and violence based solely on their faith, their heritage, or their choice of traditional clothing.

□ 2320

Americans of just about every religion and ethnic heritage lost loved ones in this terrorist attack. At least five Sikh Americans were killed in the World Trade Center, and one a convenience store owner named Balbir Singh Sodhi was shot dead last week in Phoenix by an angry gunman calling himself a patriot. Other Sikhs are facing harassment and humiliation in our airports, and every American should deplore this backlash. It is morally repugnant.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, Indian and Pakistani Americans died in the attacks, too; and they have become targets of retaliation in the aftermaths. In Dallas, a Pakistani Muslim grocer named Waqar Hassan was shot dead in a hate crime on Saturday.

In New Jersey, businesses owned by Indian Americans have been spray painted with crude epithets, warning them to leave town. Such intimidation is reminiscent of the KKK or Nazi Germany. It has no place in modern America, and all of us must stand with our neighbors in the face of such ignorance and hatred.

I am reminded of the remarks that were made on the floor of the House last Saturday morning between 12:45 and 2 a.m. in the morning when the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) said on this floor in a comment or remarks that she made on the resolution, we had to condemn this kind of bigotry, that she was locking arms that weekend with religious leaders in her community, rabbis, ministers, priests, imams and others, and walking through the streets of her community in solidarity against this kind of repression and intimidation.

Mr. Speaker, mosques and temples have been vandalized, business owners shot and killed, school children taunted, and women attacked with stones and knives. As we have just heard from the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. COOKSEY), in this House a colleague referred to the head covering some Sikhs or Muslims wear out of respect for God as a diaper, and his spokesman went on to say that all turban-wearing airline passengers should be taken aside and questioned.

Mr. Speaker, this runs directly against the very ideals that make our country great. It runs against the ideals of equality of tolerance of diversity and, yes, our own democracy. We are a Nation built by immigrants, a Nation that is stronger, not weaker for the many people and cultures who proudly call it home, and we must stand united as one people in this difficult time and this time of crisis.

So I say to my friends and colleagues here in the Chamber and across Amer-

ica, when this happens, join with your brothers and sisters of different faiths and races and nationalities and ethnicities and bind together and show your support for those who have been singled out unjustly.

America will prevail against terrorism, and we will prevail not just through the strength and the courage of our military but through the enduring strength of our most cherished principles. Only if we stand by our ideals and our neighbors will we successfully defend the Nation that we love.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PLATTS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFazio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HEALTH CARE FOR MILITARY RETIREES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to the people tonight about the terrible tragedy that occurred a week ago Tuesday, about the terrible loss of life for not only people who serve in the military at the Pentagon, the folks that worked at the World Trade Center, the people on those airplanes, but the firefighters who lost their lives trying to save the lives of others. I think it has caused us all to reflect and hopefully appreciate more those people who work every day to look out for us.

It also brings to mind the importance of rewarding those people who serve us, treating them well, paying them well, giving them the best possible equipment because as the President spoke last night, they will be called upon in the very near future.

One of the promises that has been made to those people for decades, certainly since World War II and in the Army recruiting those years all the way up to 1991, was a promise of free lifetime health care if they served their country honorably for 20 years or more in the military.

Mr. Speaker, I regret to inform my fellow citizens that because of the failure of an agreement between the Department of Defense and Medicare those military retirees who were hoping to take that benefit to a military treatment facility will probably be turned away on October 1.

I say I regret that because, as we probably know, more than half of our Nation's military retirees have chosen to retire near a military treatment facility. That is their family. We as a Nation asked them to leave their parents, leave their loved ones to go to places like Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Panama. We are getting ready to ask them to go to places like Afghanistan.

In doing so, for many of them, they lose the ability to maintain their nuclear family, so their family becomes the Air Force, the Marines, the Army, the Navy.

Since they were 18 years old, they were told they could go to a military treatment facility; but now because of the draw-down in the Department of Defense, there are not as many doctors as there used to be, and because the defense budget is tight, the Department of Defense made the decision that for those who have reached the age of 65, you cannot go to the base hospital anymore. You have got to find a private sector doctor. You have got to leave the family. I think that is a tragedy.

Again, over half of our Nation's military retirees intentionally bought a home near a base so they could use that base hospital, and now the same Nation that can provide \$16 billion in foreign aid, the same Nation that can waive the budget rules to bail out the airlines, give their corporate executives 20 and \$30 million a year to run those companies into the ground, the same Nation that can spend money left and right, waiving the rules anytime they feel like it for those who really have not earned it to this extent are going to tell our Nation's military retirees that because you do not fit quite right into the budget we cannot find the money to solve your problem.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking for an amendment that has already passed this House overwhelmingly about a year ago right now. There were 406 of my colleagues who voted to say to our Nation's military retirees that they could continue to use that base hospital and that Medicare is going to reimburse that base hospital for their care. After all, the sailors, the soldiers, the Marines, the airmen paid their Medicare taxes just like everybody else; and if it is their choice to go to a military treatment facility, then that is where they ought to be able to go.

Unfortunately, the law now blocks them from doing so. We sent that bill over to the Senate; and unfortunately the Senate chose to take our language that says they have to do it and said to Medicare, they may do it, they can reach an agreement if they feel like it.

Well, the bureaucrats at Medicare did not feel like it; and so now our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, our Marines, our coast guardsmen, they are the ones that have to suffer.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking for a real simple thing on the defense authorization bill next week. I am asking for an opportunity for this House to speak in favor for fulfilling the promise of life-

time health care to our Nation's military retirees and a Nation that is going to find \$320 billion to defend itself that just last week spent an additional \$40 billion on defense, one would think we could find a hundred million or so to do that for our Nation's military retirees.

I am particularly disturbed, Mr. Speaker, that you have put the word out that if I so much as ask for that amendment that you are going to pull the defense authorization bill. Let me say that again. If an elected representative of the people of south Mississippi so much as asks for a recorded vote on an amendment to fulfill the promise of lifetime health care for our military retirees, the Speaker of the House says he will not allow that bill to take place at all.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent for 2 additional minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair cannot entertain that request.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

□ 2330

HEALTH CARE FOR MILITARY RETIREES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PLATTS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Mississippi.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. I would like to thank my colleague from Hawaii and my other colleagues for bearing with me.

Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make is, I wish this Member had the power to keep some bills from coming to the House floor. I wish I could have kept NAFTA from coming to the floor because it has lost so many jobs for my fellow Mississippians and every American. I wish I could have kept portions of that tax bill that saw to it that half of the \$1.2 trillion in benefits went to the wealthiest fat cats in America, not the average Joes.

Mr. Speaker, if you can find the time and waive the rules to give the fat cats a tax break, you can find the time and you can waive the rules to let our military retirees go to the base hospitals. I am asking for an up or down vote. Be a decent human being and give us that vote.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

REGARDING ASPECTS OF SEPTEMBER 11 EVENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues. I am due on a TV broadcast that starts rather soon. I know this sounds rather late, but it is prime time back in my own California.

I rise to address several aspects of the recent tragedy, the recent outrage. I want to associate myself with the statements of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) when he came to this floor and talked about how important it was that we treat everyone with dignity and with respect, and decried several incidents involving discrimination against those of the Muslim, Sikh and Hindu faiths.

Let us, though, also applaud the 99.999 percent of Americans who in fact today are treating their fellow Americans with tolerance and respect. I had a large public meeting in my district in which one of the two leaders of our Islamic community commented that, yes, we should all treat everyone with respect and, yes, he was chagrined by some recent reports. But he only wondered how much worse it would be in any other country in the world for any other minority group. And, in fact, in our own country in the 1940s, we did not act with the same level of respect and tolerance that we are showing today.

Let us remember that America is not anti-Muslim and not anti-Islam. In fact, the last three military engagements of the United States were for the purpose of defending Muslim people. We restored the independence of Kuwait. We then went on to save the Bosnian Muslims from genocide. And then we bombed a Christian country, Serbia, because of what Serbia tried to do to its Albanian Muslim minority. And now American and NATO troops are engaged in Macedonia for the purpose of achieving a just result for the Albanian Muslims who are a minority in that country. So let us not only condemn every act of intolerance, but let us applaud an overwhelming majority of Americans who are acting with tolerance even at a time when emotions run high.

Let me comment on those who suggest that we modify our foreign policy in the Middle East in order to placate Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and other extremists. These calls do no honor to the greatest generation and its response to Pearl Harbor. After Pearl Harbor, there were some who suggested that all we had to do was change our foreign policy in the Far East, allow Japan to conquer all of China, and then we could avoid conflict. Instead, the greatest generation made the greatest sacrifices to win the greatest victory. It would be a dishonor to that generation for us to act any differently now that we have suffered the greatest loss of American life on American soil since our Civil War, a loss of life two to three times what we suffered at Pearl Harbor.

But not only is appeasement dishonorable, it is also, in this case, impossible. Because what motivated Osama bin Laden was a hatred for the fact that American troops are somehow "defiling" the soil of Arabia by being stationed there in defense of the Saudi and Kuwaiti regimes. Remember that if